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Option course essay

Why were the migrations that followed partition so large?

Introduction

"'There were certain people in plain clothes who were asking people to leave that place and go to Pakistan ... but people were resisting this, people said: we won't go to Pakistan ... then another military truck came, and on top of it was some leader. He brought out a pistol and said you must leave; as soon as he said that immediately a caravan was formed, and everybody cooperated.'"[1] These words were uttered by Harcharan Singh Nirman, a Punjabi eyewitness to partition. They testify to one of the chilling realities of partition – that violence, which reached genocidal proportions in the Punjab, was one of the principal factors precipitating mass movement across the borders of West and indeed East Pakistan and India. Violence manifested itself in numerous forms: arson, looting, rape, stabbing attacks, and the dismemberment of limbs were some of them, but subtler varieties of violence, such as harassment, also precipitated the movement of people across borders, both local and national. Violence was more muted in Bengal than in Punjab following partition but, as will be shown, it was not an insignificant factor in explaining mass migration in Bengal. Migration was greater in Punjab than in Bengal following partition, whereas in Bengal migration tended to be never-ending and drawn-out – borders were especially porous in Bengal.

Violence was not the only factor which caused large-scale migrations following partition. Politicians and officials ensured that partition became a reality, and although the mass exodus that followed partition was not foreseen, the cankerous quality of South Asian political life – including the rabble-rousing of sections of political organisation such as the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) – ensured that communalism would continue to grow and cause many to flee both to India and to Pakistan.

Once it became clear that the migratory flows were unstoppable, the Indian and Pakistani states, in the form of bodies such as – in Punjab – the Military Evacuation Organisations (MEOs), and through providing material and business incentives, in fact augmented the pace and extent of migration. The armed forces were officially divided, with Muslims going to

[1] Harcharan Singh Nirman, quoted in Y. Khan, *The great partition: the making of India and Pakistan*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 159.

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Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs moving to India. In the Punjab and, to a lesser extent, Delhi, the Indian and Pakistani governments agreed to effect population exchange, although this was not the case for Bengal or even Bahawalpur.

Furthermore, we should note that the porosity of the Indian and Pakistani borders long after partition itself, and the ineffectual nature of the permit system, contributed meaningfully to the sheer scale of migration following partition.

Economic 'push' and 'pull' factors are also central to explaining why the migrations that followed partition were so large. Economic boycotts pushed members of minority communities across borders, while land evacuated and businesses abandoned by those fleeing the violence were seized by those migrating in the other direction. Economic assistance for migrants was forthcoming from both the Indian and the Pakistani governments – land was offered, loans to start businesses were provided, organisations supporting cottage industries were established. This convinced many migrants that their material status would at least not be worse than it had historically been once they had migrated to the 'right' country. This was especially the case in Pakistan, where economic pull factors played a major role – land was available to a greater extent in West Punjab than in the East.

Moreover, migration following partition often occurred along migratory networks that had been in existence long before the mass exodus – partition merely enhanced the usage of these networks; partition also occurred at a time during which unskilled and semi-skilled labour was in high demand in the West, and, taking place in an age of increasing globalisation, it encouraged large-scale migration to the West and to other Commonwealth and South Asian countries.

Context to mass migrations following partition

The Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (304-232 BCE) exhorted his subjects to eschew "'tendencies like jealousy, anger, cruelty, haste, stubbornness, laziness, and fatigue."'[2] He grew up in a time of considerable cosmopolitanism and, while himself privately being a Buddhist, pledged

[2] Emperor Ashoka quoted in S. Khilnani, *Incarnations: India in fifty lives*, London: Allen Lane, 2016, p. 52.

to protect all of his subjects, regardless of their faith.[3] Ashoka's Mauryan dominion was merely one component in a long history of religious tolerance in the subcontinent. A remarkable hybrid Indo-Islamic culture emerged in early modern India.[4] The Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542-1605) is also often viewed as a harbinger of modern liberalism, along with poets such as Kabir (c.1440-c.1518) and Khusrau (1253-1325).[5]

Yasmin Khan and Alex von Tunzelmann blame the British for the erosion of tolerance. According to von Tunzelmann, when 'the British started to define "communities" based on religious identity and attach political representation to them, many Indians stopped accepting the diversity of their own thoughts and began to ask themselves in which of the boxes they belonged.'[6] Joya Chatterji explains the vim of volunteer organisations, as well as the Hindu Mahasabha and Congress organs – most prominently, the Hindu *bhadralok* – in calling for a separate Hindu province in Bengal.[7] Patrick French outlines just how much came down to a clash of personalities during the slide into partition – the relationship between Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) and Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) had become poisonous by the early nineteen-forties.[8]

Number of migrants

According to Chatterji, 'as we know, massive migrations followed [partition], the largest in recorded history.'[9] The migrations that came after partition were indeed, as the Indian civil servant V.P. Menon wrote, of 'truly Himalayan proportions'.[10] Urvashi Butalia, referring to Punjab, writes that 'Never before or since, in human history, has there been such a mass exodus of people, and in so short a time. Just the mere scale was phenomenal. Twelve million

[3] Ibid., pp. 51-2.
[4] See W. Dalrymple, 'The great divide: the violent legacy of Indian partition,' *The New Yorker*, June 29, 2015.
[5] S. Khilnani, *Incarnations*, p. 168.
[6] A. von Tunzelmann, *Indian summer: the secret history of the end of an empire*, London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2007, p. 230.
[7] See J. Chatterji, *Bengal divided: Hindu communalism and partition, 1932-1947*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
[8] P. French, *Liberty or death: India's journey to independence and division*, London: Allen Lane, 2011.
[9] J. Chatterji, 'From imperial subjects to national citizens: South Asians and the international migration regime since 1947,' in J. Chatterji and D. Washbrook eds., *Routledge handbook of the South Asian diaspora*, New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 187.
[10] V.P. Menon, *The transfer of power in India*, London: Longman, 1957, p. 432.

people crossed the border in both directions.'[11] Haimanti Roy puts the number of migrants between 1946 and 1965 for Punjab at fourteen million.[12] In an article, Chatterji writes that, all told, there were twenty million migrants by 1951,[13] and in *The spoils of partition*, she describes the official figure of just under five million migrants between India and East Bengal from 1946 to 1964 as being 'improbably conservative'.[14] Bardwaj, Khwaja, and Mian claim that the inflows for West and East Pakistan and India were 14.49 million people, while outflows were 17.9 million.[15]

Causes of mass migration: violence

'Pregnant women had their breasts cut off and babies hacked out of their bellies; infants were found literally roasted on spits.'[16] Nisid Hajari's account of partition gives violence a prominent role in explaining the mass exodus. Partition created a power vacuum – violence was one of the results of this. Violence, coloured by racial, religious and social prejudices, did indeed play a major role in bringing about mass migration, especially in Punjab, where the slaughter reached genocidal proportions. Kiernan estimates that between half a million and a million people were killed due to partition-related violence.[17] This is consonant with other estimates regarding the number of people slaughtered, such as those of Khan.[18] Such systematic slaughter could not but have an effect on migration. The horror and fear simply drove people to migrate. According to Chatterji, two million Hindus fled to India following the Noakhali and Tippera riots in 1946 and the Khulna riots in 1950.[19] The Great Calcutta Killing of 1946, in which four thousand people died and eleven thousand were seriously

[11] U. Butalia, *The other side of silence: voices from the partition of India*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, p. 60.
[12] H. Roy, *Partitioned lives: migrants, refugees, citizens in India and Pakistan, 1947-1965*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 3.
[13] J. Chatterji, 'From imperial subjects to national citizens,' in J. Chatterji and D. Washbrook eds., *Routledge handbook of the South Asian diaspora*, p. 187.
[14] J. Chatterji, *The spoils of partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 105n.
[15] P. Bardwaj, A. Khwaja, and A. Mian, 'The big march: migratory flows after the partition of India', *Economic & Political Weekly*, August 30, 2008, p. 42.
[16] N. Hajari, *Midnight's furies: the deadly legacy of India's partition*, Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015, p. xviii.
[17] V. Kiernan, 'The separation of India and Pakistan,' in R. Cohen ed., *The Cambridge survey of world migration*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 356.
[18] Y. Khan, *The great partition*, p. 6.
[19] J. Chatterji, *The spoils of partition*, p. 111.

injured, went unopposed for the first two days; it caused more people to flee.[20] But 'despite [such] warnings of population movement accompanying violence ... the migration [following partition] was wholly unanticipated by the Indian political leaderships as well as by the colonial authorities,' according to Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh.[21] British barrister Cyril Radcliffe, who drew up a border to partition India and Pakistan, did not anticipate mass migration. Jinnah, Gandhi, Nehru, and Lord Mountbatten (1900-79) were also unaware that partition would bring about such mass violence; both India and Pakistan had pledged that minorities would be protected in the new nation-states.

When the violence occurred, it had dreadful ramifications, especially in Punjab. Half a million Muslims inhabited the district of Amritsar in 1931; by 1951, a mere four thousand remained. Many had been driven out due to the violence.[22] Many prisoners were released under an amnesty following or just preceding partition. Some in Pakistan – where non-Muslims were reportedly lynched outside their cells – might have preferred to make a rather short migration, back into prison.[23] In Karachi, 'reports of violence in Punjab in the weeks after partition unnerved many,' and the Hindu presence in the city dropped from 50.9 per cent to 0.5 per cent between 1947 and 1953, despite Pakistan's attempts to retain the Hindu banking elite in the city.[24] In Lahore, the British departure spelled considerable violence, and the exodus of its Hindu and Sikh inhabitants, although a small number of Hindus remained to play key roles in the banking system.[25] There was violence in Delhi as well – neither the violence nor the mass migrations were restricted to border areas – where Muslims were driven to take sanctuary in refugee camps at the Jami Masjid, Purana Qila and Humayun's Tomb. The Muslim population of Delhi fell from 40.5 per cent in 1941 to 6.6 per cent in 1951.[26] Twenty thousand Muslims were killed in Delhi following partition.[27] Mass migrations occurred within Delhi itself, as Muslims, in a movement overseen by the state,

[20] J. Keay, *Midnight's descendants: South Asia from partition to the present day*, London: William Collins, 2014, pp. 8-9.
[21] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 90.
[22] P. Bardwaj, A. Khwaja, and A. Mian, 'The big march,' *Economic & Political Weekly*, August 30, 2008, p. 46.
[23] Y. Khan, *The great partition*, p. 150.
[24] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, p. 121.
[25] Ibid., p. 123.
[26] Ibid., p. 119.
[27] V. Zamindar, *The long partition and the making of modern South Asia: refugees, boundaries, histories*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 21.

moved from 'mixed localities' to 'Muslim zones'.[28] Although this was intended to be a temporary measure, Muslims found that they became permanently ghettoized in these 'Muslim zones', thus becoming refugees in their own city.

The poorest were often the most obvious targets of violence, being vulnerable due to their meagre status. The plight of village people who fled or were targeted by violence – including rape – after partition has been immortalised in books such as the compelling *Train to Pakistan*, written by author and journalist Khushwant Singh (1915-2014): "'We Hindus never raise our hands to strike women, but these Muslims have no respect for the weaker sex,"' exclaims one of the character in Singh's famous work.[29] The poor migrated on foot, in columns known as *kafilas*.[30] It has been estimated that one million people crossed the border by foot, the largest *kafila* containing a vast 400,000 people – these people had, in the main, been compelled to move due to violence, coupled with the sense that they were simply not welcome as hated minorities in the 'wrong' country; they hoped that their prospects – economic, political, and social – would be better in the 'right' country.

After partition, 'India's arms were chopped off without anaesthesia, and streams of blood flooded the land of the five rivers known as the Punjab.' So writes Khushwant Singh in *Absolute Khushwant*, a collection of his writings.[31] So terrified was Singh, while fleeing Lahore for Delhi – despite the personal reassurances of Jinnah that he could and ought to remain in Pakistan – that he carried a revolver with him, although he 'didn't even know how to fire one.'[32] Jinnah had promised to make Singh a judge of the Lahore High Court.[33] But it is clear from Singh's eyewitness account that the violence was just so chilling and widespread that many people – even those with apparently good prospects, such as Singh – could not be persuaded to remain in their country of birth. Some Hindus did not wish to leave Pakistan; but many were harassed while going about their normal business, and this persuaded them to up sticks as well.[34] The writer Nirad C. Chaudhuri described a murder in

[28] Ibid., p. 119.
[29] K. Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, New Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 1956, pp. 22-3.
[30] See U. Butalia, *The other side of silence*, p. 60.
[31] K. Singh, with H. Quraishi, 'On partition,' in *Absolute Khushwant: the low-down on life, death and most things in-between*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010, p. 106.
[32] Ibid., p. 108
[33] Ibid., p. 107.
[34] S. Ansari, *Life after partition: migration, community and strife in Sindh: 1947-1962*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 58.

Calcutta – a man was tied to the connector box of the tramlines with a small hole drilled in his skull, so that he would bleed to death as slowly as possible.[35] According to William Dalrymple, seventy-five thousand women were raped – and many were also dismembered or disfigured – due to partition-related violence.[36] The sheer shock generated by such incidents convinced many people that they were not safe, and that they must flee. According to Chatterji, a million more fled East Pakistan after holy relics were stolen from the Hazratbal shrine in Kashmir in 1964. Furthermore, 'Migration from east to west also tended to increase whenever relations between India and Pakistan worsened. When the two countries were at odds, whether over India's takeover of the princely state of Hyderabad, or over Kashmir, tensions on the bigger stage drove Hindus out of East Bengal into India.'[37] This makes clear that mass migration due to the violence continued long after partition, but partition was the harbinger of such violence-induced mass migration, and the subsequent exoduses often had a communally-inspired flavour tinged with the blood-drenched character of partition itself. Riot zones were declared in cities across the subcontinent between 1946 and 1950, and the violence even occurred in places as far south as Secunderabad. 'This was,' writes Yasmin Khan, 'nothing short of a continental disaster.'[38] Four thousand migrants were even recorded in Chennai in South India – many had been convinced to move to Tamil Nadu due to violence.[39]

A pioneering study of a Nadia village, drawn upon in Chatterji's work, demonstrates how many people migrated due to violence or the fear of violence. Most families left either due to fear of violence or due to harassment, although only nine households had suffered from actual violence. Eighty-two households left due to harassment by Muslims, forty-one due to fear of violence.[40] Although there were a number of other factors precipitating movement, it is clear that violence and harassment were significant considerations among many families that did move, even in Bengal. A small number of families left due to floods, sixteen households left because everybody else had fled.[41] But it might also have been the case that some of those who fled ostensibly for reasons other than violence were also affected by

[35] W. Dalrymple, 'The great divide,' *The New Yorker*, June 29, 2015.
[36] Ibid.
[37] J. Chatterji, *The spoils of partition*, p. 111.
[38] Y. Khan, *The great partition*, pp. 7-8.
[39] P. Bardwaj, A. Khwaja, and A. Mian, 'The big march,' *Economic & Political Weekly*, August 30, 2008, p. 46.
[40] J. Chatterji, *The spoils of partition*, p. 113.
[41] Ibid.

violence, or the fear of it. It is clear even from the Nadia study that violence was not an insignificant reason for mass migration. This example is especially interesting as it comes from Bengal, which was comparatively quiet when compared with the murderous turmoil of Punjab. Overall, on the evidence, it is clear that violence was a major reason causing mass migration.

Causes of mass migration: the role of officials, politicians, and administrators

'Once the decision to divide up the country had been taken, everything else had to be divided too.'[42] The role of officials and politicians in causing mass migration will now be considered. On 18 July 1947, the Indian Independence Bill became law. It instituted ten committees to deal with the various aspects of partition. Among these were 'foreign relations' and 'armed forces'.[43] The police and armed forces would be reconstituted – non-Muslims serving in the Indian army did not have the option of joining the Pakistani armed forces, while Muslims serving in the Indian army had to move to Pakistan. A large number of military personnel thus had to move country, heading away from their place of station to the 'right' nation. The Indian government also attempted forcibly to move Muslims of Afghan and Arab origin from Hyderabad, which was integrated into the Indian Union in 1948; these individuals were considered doubly alien not only on account of their Muslim faith but also due to their countries of ultimate origin.[44]

In Punjab, military personnel also played a role in the formation and operation of the MEOs. The MEOs brought about a 'mutually organised transfer of population'[45] in this region, planned at the official level. Their work 'resulted in virtual depopulation of East Punjab by Muslims and of West Punjab by Hindus and Sikhs.'[46] Although political leaders had not anticipated the mass exodus, once it became clear that people were migrating en masse, politicians and administrators put in place organisations such as the MEOs that would bring about a large and hasty mass migration. According to Butalia, between August and November 1947, up to 673 refugee trains moved 2,800,000 refugees within India and across

[42] U. Butalia, *The other side of silence*, p. 62.
[43] Ibid., pp. 59-60.
[44] See T. Sherman, 'Migration, citizenship and belonging in Hyderabad (Deccan), 1946-1956,' *Modern Asian Studies* 45 (1), 2011, pp. 81-107.
[45] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, p. 96.
[46] Ibid.

the border. In just one month, the MEOs used one million gallons of petrol to evacuate people in East Punjab.[47] Chatterji explains that by the end of 1947, the MEOs had evacuated five million refugees across the borders between India and Pakistan.[48] The MEOs set up headquarters on both sides of the new international boundary, organised road transportation in army trucks, and requisitioned civilian vehicles. District officials provided funds, escorts, and scarce supplies to facilitate their work.[49] Furthermore, on 20 October 1947 the Joint Evacuation Plan was agreed upon between the Indian and Pakistani MEOs and a December target was set for moving ten million refugees either side of the Punjab. This 'elaborate machinery' meant that, according to Talbot and Singh, 'Minority populations had no choice but to leave their ancestral homes'.[50] Official assistance also came from British and Indian air carriers. Jinnah had been calling for a separate Muslim homeland for some years prior to partition. The infusion of religion into nationalist politics was helped by people like Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), and Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950).[51] This fed into the growth of communalism, the violence and sentiments flowing from the development of which had a knock-on effect in terms of mass migration, and was partly responsible for the partition in the first place. In the case of Bengal, the role of politicians and officials in bringing about mass migration was also demonstrated by the signing of the Nehru-Liaquat Pact of April 1950. This promised equality of citizenship for minority communities and pledged that those who returned home by 31 December 1950 would be entitled to restoration of their houses and land. Following the Pact, 1,200,000 refugees returned to East Bengal, and the provincial government set aside the by no means munificent sum of 700,000 rupees for their rehabilitation; most recovered their abandoned houses.[52]

Causes of mass migration: the porosity of borders, and the ineffectuality of the permit system

"'I do not consider Pakistan and India as two different countries. If I have to go to the Punjab, I am not going to ask for a passport. And I shall go to Sind also without a passport and I shall

[47] U. Butalia, *The other side of silence*, p. 60.
[48] J. Chatterji, 'From imperial subjects to national citizens,' in J. Chatterji and D. Washbrook eds., *Routledge handbook of the South Asian diaspora*, p. 187.
[49] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, p. 102.
[50] Ibid.
[51] For a discussion of the intersection between religion and nationalism in Bengal, see J. Chatterji, 'Introduction,' in *Bengal divided*.
[52] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, p. 103.

go walking. Nobody can stop me.'"[53] That borders would dramatically harden after partition was 'barely imaginable to the political protagonists in 1947.'[54] In the novel, *Sunlight on a broken column*, two Muslim brothers in North India speak about the future in 1947, one opting to remain in India, the other moving to Pakistan: "'Can you imagine every time we want to see each other we'll have to cross national frontiers? Maybe even have to get visas," he added wryly. "Oh come on Kemal," Saleem laughed, "there is no need to be as dramatic as all that. Visas indeed!'"[55]

The borders between West and East Pakistan and India, 'especially the one in divided Bengal,' were noteworthy for their 'porosity' post-partition.[56] However, the western border closed relatively quickly compared with the eastern border; permits were in place on the western border by 1948. As Haimanti Roy notes, the Bengal border remained porous even after 1952, and refugees continued to arrive even after 1958, when the last refugee camp was shut down.[57] Massive migrations occurred in 1964 and 1971. The porosity of borders, coupled with the ineffectuality of the permit system, ensured that migration – for some years after partition, and even in the west – remained an easy process; it contributed to the mass migrations that followed partition. Talbot and Zamindar have demonstrated how formal immigration controls were only slowly extended on the western border and that, when the violence subsided, there was considerable movement back and forth.[58] Roy has referred to the Bengal border as being an 'open border' for many years following partition.[59] Willem van Schendel, in *The Bengal borderland*, captures this fact. He relates the story of Haru Mondol, a young boy who found that the new border ran right through the family's ancestral land: 'Haru's father stayed put in what was now India, but Haru's uncle built a new house on the land just across the border. In this way, the two brothers and their offspring became citizens of two countries but continued to cultivate the family land jointly.'[60] The porosity of borders meant that movements across borders occurred routinely, here even on a daily basis. Furthermore, as Talbot and Singh note, 'migration was not just a single journey. Many

[53] Gandhi quoted in Y. Khan, *The great partition*, p. 194.
[54] Y. Khan, *The great partition*, p. 197.
[55] A. Hosain, *Sunlight on a broken column*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1961, p. 287.
[56] H. Roy, *Partitioned lives*, p. 17.
[57] Ibid., p. 12.
[58] I. Talbot and V. Zamindar, *Divided cities: partition and its aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar, 1947-1957*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
[59] H. Roy, *Partitioned lives*, pp. 18-19.
[60] W. van Schendel, *The Bengal borderland: beyond state and nation in South Asia*, London: Anthem Press, 2005, p. 123.

refugees, especially those from an urban background, travelled from place to place in their new homeland before finally settling permanently.'[61]

In the West, many simply wandered about for years before finally settling down.[62] The permit system, introduced in the West in the summer of 1948, prevented people returning to India from Pakistan without a permit.[63] It was also introduced in Pakistan, where refugees had to demonstrate that they had no public debts in order to be permitted to leave the nation. However, it was not properly enforced in either country – fifteen thousand people were leaving Karachi for Bombay and the Kathiawar ports each week following institution of the system, and many of them would not have left had the system been properly enforced.[64] The permit system was, in practice, heavily reliant upon both the self-identification of individuals and the everyday understandings of belonging for the production of permits.[65] After partition, according to Khan, 'the public anticipated soft borders and hoped for a free and early association with the neighbouring country.'[66] If this was what the public hoped for, they got their wish – for some years, both the borders remained porous. Even the passports system – introduced after the permit system as borders finally began to harden – was not properly enforced for some years, although admittedly it did make movement between India and Pakistan harder. The porosity of borders thus goes some way to explaining why the migrations that followed partition were so large, especially in Bengal.

Causes of mass migration: economic motivations, and the use of pre-existing migration networks

According to Verne A. Dusenbery, 'Sikhs claim, without too much exaggeration, that there hardly remains a place on earth without a local Sikh population. Or, as one Sikh joke has it: When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, a Sardarji (i.e., a Sikh male) was already there to

[61] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, pp. 98-9.
[62] On the 'years of wandering,' see I. Talbot ed., with D.S. Tatla, *Epicentre of violence: partition voices and memories from Amritsar*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006.
[63] J. Chatterji, 'From imperial subjects to national citizens,' in J. Chatterji and D. Washbrook eds., *Routledge handbook of the South Asian diaspora*, p. 187.
[64] S. Ansari, *Life after partition*, p. 58.
[65] T. Sherman, 'Migration, citizenship and belonging in Hyderabad' *Modern Asian Studies*, p. 83.
[66] Y. Khan, *The great partition*, p. 194.

tap him on the shoulder and ask, "Taxi, sir?"'[67] The final sections of this essay will examine the economic motivations for post-partition migration. They will also explore how pre-partition networks of migration were drawn upon following partition by members of various communities.

The Sikhs had been classified as a 'martial race' by the British in the nineteenth century, and they had, according to Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, 'a tradition of migration.'[68] They had been recruited in large numbers by the colonial army, resettled in fertile colonies in West Punjab, and transported to colonies such as Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, and even parts of Africa, mainly for watch and ward duties: 'Therefore, in the pre-partition period a significant number of Sikhs had developed overseas links and many had been exposed to the larger world beyond the Punjab.'[69] Lascars from Bengal had travelled across South Asia and other regions for centuries before partition. The Sindis are described by Tan and Kudaisya as a 'global tribe of dispersed people' who are interconnected by an extensive business network which operates on the basis of kinship and trust.[70] Sindi merchants had ventured overseas for centuries in search of economic opportunity and profit, and had established a successful trading network covering parts of East Africa and Central Asia, and which was especially well entrenched in all the major Asian port cities such as Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Manila.[71] Furthermore, there were sects of Muslims such as the Bohras and Khojas in western Indian, and the Guajarati-speaking Memons of Bombay who loathed 'the too-powerful competition of Hindu capital.'[72] Many of them were prepared to take the short journey by sea to Karachi after partition, a safer route than travelling over land. The Punjabi community of Delhi had been growing since the late nineteenth century, and many migrants came to Delhi and other North Indian towns from West Punjab following partition – businesses in these areas would proclaim their owners' place of origin in West Punjab.[73] Most who came to Delhi following partition did so due to economic 'pull' factors.

[67] V.A. Dusenbery, 'Introduction: a century of Sikhs beyond Punjab,' in N.G. Barrier and V.A. Dusenbery eds., *The Sikh diaspora: migration and experience beyond Punjab*, Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1989, p. 2.
[68] T.Y. Tan and G. Kudaisya, *The aftermath of partition in South Asia*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 231.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., p. 232.
[71] Ibid.
[72] V. Kiernan, 'The separation of India and Pakistan,' in R. Cohen ed., *The Cambridge survey of world migration*, p. 357.
[73] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, pp. 119-20.

Sikhs and Sindis, Memons and lascars: all were involved in the – now globally – interconnected world of trade and profit. Although Hindu Sindis were not especially badly affected by violence after partition, they ran scared after the influx of Muslims into Sind, especially in the commercial centre of Karachi; they felt that their commercial interests were now under threat. Tan and Kudaisya point out that 'the Sikhs as a community were among the worst victims of Partition.' Sikhs such as Khushwant Singh, who inhabited Punjab (especially central Punjab, mostly between the Beas and the Chenab), were all too often targets of violence following partition; the Sikh community as a whole also provoked the ire of Muslims thanks to the efforts of some of its members to sabotage trains passing into Pakistan – groups of Sikhs, sometimes hundreds strong, often waited in the long grass around train tracks to ambush passing carriages. Although Sikhs were welcomed with open arms by their co-religionists in East Punjab, it often took them years of struggle once again to attain the levels of economic well-being to which they had historically been accustomed. Often, this entailed 'moving from one place to another in search of livelihood.'[74] This explains the chain of migrations that took place among Sikhs and, to an extent, Sindis. Labour shortages in the West – brought about due to the effects of the Second World War – also compelled some Sikhs to move abroad. By the end of the 1950s, eight to ten per cent of Sikhs had migrated overseas, while a further thirty per cent were living in India but outside Punjab in towns and cities of adjacent provinces and in Delhi.[75] The transregional and transnational networks that Sikhs and Sindis moved along after partition had been established prior to partition, but they were drawn upon heavily after partition, also helping to explain why the migrations following partition were so large. Sikhs, Sindis and others were quick to scent opportunity, being shrewd in business matters, and this explains in part why so many of them migrated both within South Asia and further afield following partition.

More generally, economic 'push' and 'pull' factors help to explain the mass exodus which came after partition. Economic boycotts damaged the businesses of minorities; in the Nadia village discussed by Chatterji, there were tales of how Muslims "'stole [Hindus'] harvest, cows and boats"'.[76] In Dacca, the Hindu population fell from fifty-eight per cent to just 4.6 per cent after partition: large-scale Hindu out-migration occurred, 'mainly as a result of

[74] T.Y. Tan and G. Kudaisya, *The aftermath of partition in South Asia*, p. 231.
[75] Ibid., p. 232.
[76] J. Chatterji, *The spoils of partition*, p. 111.

economic losses;'[77] furthermore, homes were requisitioned by the East Bengal government to accommodate civil servants, 1,100 homes being taken over in this manner between August 1947 and March 1948.[78] Hindus leaving Pakistan left behind, according to Kiernan, 'vastly more property' than Muslims leaving India, another reason for Muslims to migrate from India in such large numbers to take advantage of the property that had become available.[79] Although for a while after partition, some migrants 'harboured hopes' of returning to their countries of origin,[80] the gradual hardening of borders began to preclude this, and property became available for migrants who had entered the country – the spoils of partition that were on offer were tempting to many.

Furthermore, government 'pull' factors had an effect on persuading some to migrate. Governments built townships for refugees – twenty-seven satellite towns and colonies were planned for in Pakistan, many around Karachi;[81] nineteen new townships had been founded in the north and west of India by 1957.[82] Governments also provided loans to refugees to help them get their businesses off the ground again, although this was less the case in West Bengal. In some cases, schemes were quite generous, and had the effect of convincing refugees that they would not be any worse off were they to migrate. Fertile irrigated land in the 'Canal Colonies' in West Punjab in Pakistan was allocated to refugees who wanted it. By 1954, up to five hundred acres of irrigated land or one thousand acres of unirrigated land was being offered to the incoming migrants.[83] Small industries were also encouraged, to the benefit of migrants. In Pakistan, a directorate of cottage and small scale industries was established, as was a refugee rehabilitation finance corporation. In India, a national small industries corporation was set up, and Nehru backed cottage industries. These 'pull' factors ensured that the migrations that followed partition thanks to economic reasons were very substantial.

[77] I. Talbot, and G. Singh, *The partition of India*, p. 118.
[78] Ibid.
[79] V. Kiernan, 'The separation of India and Pakistan,' in R. Cohen ed., *The Cambridge survey of world migration*, p. 356.
[80] J. Chatterji, 'From imperial subjects to national citizens,' in J. Chatterji and D. Washbrook eds., *Routledge handbook of the South Asian diaspora*, p. 187.
[81] V. Kiernan, 'The separation of India and Pakistan,' in R. Cohen ed., *The Cambridge survey of world migration*, p. 357.
[82] Ibid., p. 358.
[83] Ibid., p. 356.

Conclusion

This essay has explored the reasons why the migrations that followed partition were so large. There was not one single factor that caused the mass exodus that came after partition.

Violence and harassment were clearly considerable 'push' factors, even in Bengal – where the bloodshed was less widespread than in Punjab – as Chatterji's example of the village in Nadia demonstrates. The violence in Punjab terrified migrants such as Khushwant Singh.

Sometimes, violence might coalesce with other concerns such as loss of status in persuading people to move. Some migrants, such as Sindis, Bohras, and Khojas, were hardly affected by violence, but they decided to move anyway. These 'shrewd men of affairs'[84] were more often than not motivated to move by economic reasons, or were just going about their business along old trade networks; partition merely enhanced the usage of these long-established networks.

Official bodies such as – in Punjab – the MEOs, and the intransigence of politicians such as Jinnah, coupled with the rabble-rousing of organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha, RSS, and the Bengal Congress helped to foster a culture of communalism partly responsible for the bringing about of partition, and helping to explain the great exodus which followed partition. The porosity of borders for some years after partition – especially in the East – did not help to stem the tide of migrants.

Thus there were many factors which led to the mass migrations that followed partition. It might be one factor, or a combination of factors, that persuaded someone to up sticks. In any case, the migrations that followed partition were indeed gargantuan.

Word count: 4,999

[84] Ibid., p. 357.

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